



For Immediate Release:

August 7, 2014

First Human Cases of West Nile Virus Reported in LA County

Reminder to all residents to take precautions against mosquitoes

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has confirmed the first human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) infection in Los Angeles County for the 2014 season. A female, 60s, from the San Fernando Valley with no prior medical history was hospitalized for WNV disease mid-July. The patient is in the hospital and recovering. The second case, a WNV-positive asymptomatic blood donor, male 20s, was reported in late July. He resides in the southern part of the county and remains healthy.

“All residents should take the proper precautions to avoid and protect against mosquitoes, as that is the primary way the disease is transmitted. Mosquitoes obtain the virus by feeding on infected wild birds,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “West Nile can appear anywhere in Los Angeles County, or around the state, and we are urging people to take precautions, such as getting rid of pools of stagnant water around their homes, and using a repellent containing DEET when outdoors in mosquito prone areas, especially around dawn or dusk.”

In 2013, 165 human cases of WNV were reported in Los Angeles County, among the highest counts documented since 2004. Of those who showed symptoms and were reported, 122 cases required hospitalization and 9 cases were fatal. Most people with WNV infection have mild or no symptoms and do not seek medical care; therefore, the total number of WNV infections is much larger than the number reported. As of August 5, 2014, non-human WNV activity has been detected in 48 mosquito pools, 10 dead birds, and 14 sentinel chickens located all across Los Angeles County. Thirty-five human infections have been documented in the state of California.

While agencies such as the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District and the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District are actively treating areas with high mosquito populations, residents are urged to do their part. “Vector control agencies in LA County cannot do it alone. It is imperative that the public help minimize the risk of being bitten by removing sources of water on their property that can breed mosquitoes. This is not a virus to take lightly,” said Truc Dever, General Manager for the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District. “Additionally, residents should report dead birds, and also report sources of standing water to their local vector control agencies.”

Report dead birds online at http://www.westnile.ca.gov/report_wnv.php or call (877) 968-2473. Stagnant swimming pools or “green pools” should be reported to the Public Health Environmental Health Bureau at (626) 430-5200, or to a local vector control agency.

About West Nile Virus:

WNV is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito; mosquitoes can become infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. Most mosquitoes do not carry the virus and most people bitten by a mosquito are not exposed to the virus. The virus is not spread through person-to-person contact, or directly from birds to humans.



In most cases, people who are infected with West Nile virus never become sick or have only very mild symptoms that include fever, headache, nausea, body aches, and a mild skin rash. Symptoms of WNV could appear within three to 12 days after infection. Fewer than one in 150 people who are bitten by an infected mosquito become severely ill, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In rare cases, the virus can cause encephalitis and death. The elderly and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk for developing severe symptoms, which may require hospitalization. Recovery from any infection with the virus can take months to years and include symptoms of fatigue, malaise, and depression. There is no specific treatment for this disease.

Decrease risk of infection:

- Avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn and dusk.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.
- Repellants containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of eucalyptus, when used as labeled, are effective defenses against mosquitoes.
- Check your window screens for holes.
- Do not allow water to collect and stagnate in old tires, flowerpots, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, or other containers. These are prime breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools; drain water from pool covers.
- Stock garden ponds with goldfish or other mosquito-eating fish. These eat mosquito eggs and larvae.
- Empty and wash birdbaths and wading pools weekly.

More information:

- Information on West Nile Virus by phone: (800) 232-4636.
- Information on West Nile Virus on the web: <http://westnile.ca.gov/>

Where to call with questions about mosquitoes:

Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District: (562) 944-9656

Los Angeles County West Vector Control District: (310) 915-7370

San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (626) 814-9466

Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (661) 942-2917

Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District: (310) 933-5321

Pasadena City Health Department: (626) 744-6004

City of Long Beach Vector Control Program: (562) 570-4132

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit

<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at

<http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at

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